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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS

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DEVELOPING COUNTY AND LOCAL PROGRAMS*

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Before the county program as constituted in Georgia is discussed something must be said of the county organization for extension work.

In the beginning of the work the county agent devoted his efforts to individuals, mostly one at a time, and many times almost exhausted his powers of persuasion in order to serve even individually. Time has removed us from that pioneer stage, and now we are faced with the problem of reaching all who are clamoring for our assistance.

Campaign teaching by the agent in the county, with the help of a specialist from the college, was a second-stage growth, and more people became interested. Field meetings at individual demonstrations on small areas marked another stage. Community clubs with attempts at building miscellaneous programs with a miscellaneous interested group for the work in a community made another stage. Later a county organization through which the agent might function through committees afforded a still better way, but the miscellaneous interest still obtained.

Two years ago we entered into another stage of development which now promises to be a better scheme of organization for extension work in a county than any yet tried by us. We are trying to organize about the problem or interest. We are seeking to build the interest on a county-unit basis with the individuals concerned in the interest, rather than simply developing the interest with the individual. When a demonstration in a certain interest is given in a community, it is made a community demonstration, not an individual demonstration, for showing the solution of certain problems in building the interest in that community of the county.

The County Organization for Extension Work.

The county agricultural board.- This board is composed of recognized leaders in specific agricultural interests that are being developed in the county and of representatives elected from and by farmers', business, and civic organizations in the county because of their known interest in building the farming interests within the county. For instance, at the outset it is known, say, that, farm dairying, hogs, poultry, cotton, and truck are specific

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interests that are to be developed in the county. None of these interests is organized, but a recognized leader in each interest is known. His consent to serve is obtained and he is selected as a leader for the interest on the board and for the county. Thus, after the board is fully constituted, there is a leader for each project or commodity interest that is to be developed.

The commodity or project committee helpers.- The leader on the agricultural board for an interest serves as chairman of a committee of helpers for developing the interest in the county. The committeemen are selected because of their ability as leaders in the interest in their communities. Five is recommended as a good number for such a committee. Subcommittees for community work are used also.

The committee helpers assist in getting the farmers behind the interest they represent, determining the status of the interest existing, formulating a program of work, setting down demonstration centers, and otherwise advancing the interest in the county. The county agent serves as worker and instructor of helpers and others for the interest, serving groups and individuals but keeping the interest in mind.

Developing Programs.

Now that we have described the extension machinery in a county as we are beginning to get it constituted, we are better able to discuss program building. Unless we have a plan of action, neither work nor interest will continue among those for whom and with whom we are working.

The county agricultural development program.- A wise county agent will soon learn more about the agriculture of the county than any one else in the county knows. But when he knows this, it will be of little value to him in his work until he gets others, especially the leaders, to know as he does. The first work then of the agent with the county agricultural board is to make as thorough a study of the existing conditions in the county as it is possible to make. The agent will guide this study certainly, and do much of the work in connection with the effort, but always seeking the cooperation of board members.

This study takes the form of a survey to know the status, needs, and requirements. It is the first part of a county agricultural development program. A program, of course, may be made without such careful study, but it certainly will not meet the needs or requirements nearly so well. A real study often changes ideas of conditions. The facts obtained also serve to stimulate interest and make the best material for arousing enthusiasm for bettering conditions. When the status, needs, and requirements are known as accurately as possible, then the board, with the guidance of the agent, can plan much more intelligently the objectives toward which the agricultural interests in the county are to be built.

Thus the agricultural development program for the county consists of two parts: (1) The survey, the studying and recording of facts as to existing conditions; and (2) the objectives, determined by the lines of activity, interests to be developed, and goals to be attained. The development program, therefore, furnishes propaganda material and is an indicator of the interests to be developed for meeting the existing needs.

A program is of little value without efforts at execution. A program for development of the agricultural interests of a county must be adopted by others than merely those who assisted in its constitution, or else it may soon be forgotten. All the publicity possible should be given the program. There are several ways of doing this. Some counties in Georgia during the past year did this through printing and distributing the program throughout the counties. The county papers carried information about it and news items as to the efforts being put forth in connection with it. Committees from the civic organizations, particularly the Kiwanis Clubs, put themselves at the direction of the agents and agricultural boards. These committees, with leading farmers associated as community committee helpers, arranged meetings at which adoption of the program was urged, as well as the enrollment of as many as would into the interests indicated. In one county I recall that in a single night, after the committees had been instructed and drilled by the agent and other leaders, the whole county was covered by such committees. In this way the specific interests that are to be pushed during the year, or a period of years it may be, are definitely presented. Indications as to what is thought should be accomplished in these interests are offered. The farmers are enrolled in the interests in which they may be most concerned.

A program of work for a specific interest.- When it is known what specific interests are to be made the major projects for work in the county, and some of the farmers are enrolled in these interests, or even before this, the agent with the help of the commodity or project committee of helpers for a certain interest considers the study already made, as shown in the county-development program, and perhaps studies more closely the status of the interest under consideration, as well as objectives to attain, and makes a list of the problems that are to be solved. The agent, will have ready a framed tentative outline for such a program of work when the committee helpers are brought together for study, changes, confirmation, and devising ways and means for action.

A program of work for an interest thus consists of three parts: (1) A survey, (2) objectives, and (3) problems. Three kinds of problems will be found. Some may be solved by the agent working alone for individuals or with a group for the building of the interest; others will require committee action for best solution, and still others will need farm demonstrations to show the solution.

Community demonstration centers.- The county is the unit for the development of specific interests. The interest, of course, must be developed in the sections of the county to which it is adapted. When the problems that require demonstrations have been determined, the communities, or at least a committee, should assist in locating the center farm for the demonstration. For example, the other day an agent told me that, in connection with the program of work for a certain interest, he and the committee helpers had visited a community to locate a demonstration-center farm. After discussion of the problems and the purpose of the visit, a committee was appointed to

decide the location. Later, a farmer came to the agent's office to apply for the demonstration on his farm. The agent referred him to the interest committee, which investigated and made the location. The community thus came to know about the location of the demonstration and understood that it was for the community's benefit in solving the problems, rather than an individual service to the farmer on whose farm the demonstration was located.

Thus, through an agricultural board, a county development program, committee helpers, programs of work for specific interests, and demonstration-center farms, we are striving in Georgia to systematize and organize the work in counties to reach greater numbers, to get better results in building interests instead of merely serving individuals, and to develop leadership among our farmers.

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